Chapter 1320: Challenging the Jia Corridor!

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Geji! Geji!

Standing at the very center of the room, Zhang Xuan watched as a puppet walked out from a door ahead of him, and he heaved a deep sigh of helplessness.

He had already cleared eight of the ten Leaving Aperture realm Corridor of Puppets, but he was still unable to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Left with no choice, he could only head over here to challenge the most difficult trial of all.

In the long several dozen millennium years of history behind the Sanctum of Sages, only seven people had cleared the trial in total. From this, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how difficult the trial was.

*The puppet in the Yi Corridor has already reached Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage, so the one in the Jia Corridor [1] is bound to be even stronger!*Zhang Xuan thought as he assessed the puppet before him with narrowed eyes.

Challenging the Yi Corridor had already posed a great challenge to him. He had to use the flaws he had found in the puppet from the Library of Heaven's Path and the keen discernment of his Eye of Insight in order to design a whole series of maneuvers before he was finally able to corner the puppet and subdue it.

But even so, he still suffered some injuries in the midst of the challenge. It was fortunate that he was able to recover swiftly through his Heaven's Path zhenqi, or else he might have to retire for the day.

According to what the female receptionist, Qing Yu, has said, Ruoxin has cleared the Jia Corridor… So, the least I can do is to clear it as well! Zhang Xuan thought determinedly as a powerful fighting spirit flowed forth from him.

Of the seven people who had cleared the Jia Corridor, Luo Ruoxin was one of them.

Since his girlfriend was able to clear it, he mustn't lose out either! Otherwise, how could he be qualified to ask for her marriage in hand?

After walking out from the door, the puppet abruptly opened its eyes and announced grandly, "To dare to challenge the Jia Corridor, you must be really confident in your strength. Very well, let me see what you are capable of then!"

"You are able to speak?" Zhang Xuan frowned in bewilderment.

Even the puppet he had modified earlier in the Bing Corridor was only capable of muttering a couple of incoherent syllables. Yet, the puppet before him was actually

capable of voicing human speech. This was inconceivable!

“Let’s begin the battle!” Couldn’t even be bothered to waste its breath on words anymore, the puppet uttered coldly before charging forward.

Hu!

Its movements were as swift as a bolt of lightning, and it took only an instant for it to appear before Zhang Xuan.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan didn’t expect the puppet to move so quickly, covering the ten meters between them instantaneously as if teleportation. He quickly took a step forward as well to build up some momentum as he thrust his palm toward the puppet.

In an instant, countless palm prints materialized all over the area, as if a garden of resplendent flowers had blossomed in the midst of the battlefield all of a sudden. They converged with one another to form a seemingly relentless current of force that threatened to wear down any opponent.

This was a battle technique he had obtained from the Yi Corridor, Overlapping Palm.

This palm art worked in a manner strikingly similar to the Thousand Hands of Rulai [2] . Its prowess would stack up layer after layer on one another, leaving one feeling as if one would be washed by its might.

While this attack wasn't as powerful as the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm in terms of offensive, it was an excellent move when used in defensive maneuvers. More importantly, due to how complex the technique was, it was extremely difficult to distinguish real threats from feints, thus possibly creating unexpected results in battle.

Hong long!

But while Zhang Xuan's palm strike was formidable, the puppet was even stronger. Using some sort of bizarre battle technique, the sheer might of its fist seemed to seal the surrounding space completely, preventing the countless palms from converging with one another, thus rendering it completely ineffective.

The puppet has cultivated Overlapping Palms too… Zhang Xuan frowned in realization.

To be able to make such instantaneous judgement to effectively neutralize his attacks, there could only be one possibility… The puppet must have a deep understanding of Overlapping Palms as well, and it knew the ideal moments to strike in order to nerf the offense.

While Zhang Xuan did improve the palm strike significantly through compiling it with various other palm art manuals in the Library of Heaven's Path, those who were familiar in the technique would still be able to find an opportunity to step in and counterattack.

This wasn't about exploiting the flaws in the palm technique but simply the natural manner how the certain maneuvers would curb one another.

"Break!" Knowing that he would only be placed in a deeply disadvantageous position if he were to continue pushing his Overlapping Palms on, he decisively changed his palm strike into a sword art instead. With a flick of his finger, a powerful surge of sword qi burst forth.

Having comprehended Sword Quintessence, every single movement that Zhang Xuan made could be considered as a sword art. Even though he didn't execute any battle

techniques, he might he could exert at will was still not beneath any ordinary sword art.

Pu! The sword qi instantaneously sliced through the space which the puppet had constructed and flew straight for the latter's glabella.

"Hmph!" In face of the swift transformations in Zhang Xuan's attacks, it harrumphed coldly.

Without the slightest hint of panic, it calmly opened up its tightly-clenched fist like a blossoming orchid, and several surges of sword qi short forth from it.

Po! Po! Po!

The sword qi collided with one another, causing a resounding explosion in the air before vanishing simultaneously.

The clash in sword qi left Zhang Xuan with suffocating sensation welling up in his chest. It seemed the backlash of the collision had caused some internal injuries to him.

Sword Quintessence? A puppet actually managed to achieve the level of Sword Quintessence?

He had known that the puppet of the Jia Corridor would be formidable, but he didn't think that the latter would be such a powerful opponent!

It was one thing for it to have grasped the Overlapping Palms, but to actually possess such a deep comprehension of swordsmanship as well, achieving the level of Sword Quintessence… This was really unbelievable!

From how Zhang Jiuxiao was able to rely on his Half-Quintessence comprehension of swordsmanship and his shallow understanding of the Three Swords of Lingxu to get into the Sanctum of Sages, it could be seen how rare top sword practitioners were.

For a puppet to actually wield such deep understanding of swordsmanship as well, it would have been a lie if he were to say that he wasn't astounded.

Wait a moment, it's impossible for a puppet to comprehend Sword Quintessence by itself. Its innate flaws render it incapable of comprehending such conceptualizations. From the looks of it, it appears that an expert sword practitioner who has comprehended True Quintessence had infused a part of himself into the puppet's body, thus granting it the ability to execute such a powerful sword qi! A moment after his shock, Zhang Xuan swiftly realized that something was amiss with the situation.

Puppets weren't capable of cultivation or comprehension unless under certain unique circumstances. They could fight on command, but every single moves they made would be programmed beforehand.

In other words, the Sword Quintessence which the puppet had displayed wasn't its own comprehension but merely a fragment of memory of a sword expert.

In other words… even though the puppets were capable of executing moves that wielded the prowess of Sword Quintessence, its failure to grasp the fundamental principles behind it would limit the flexibility of its moves.

But even if that was the case, it still wouldn't be easy to deal with the puppet.

It'll be difficult for me to outmaneuver the puppet in terms of swordsmanship since it has grasped Sword Quintessence and wields far greater strength and speed than me, and in

terms of palm arts, I'm not an opponent for it either… Zhang Xuan's mind swiftly whirred into action.

If the puppet was still of equivalent cultivation realm as Zhang Xuan, he might still have been able to outmaneuver it in terms of swordsmanship with time, but the vast disparity in their fundamental abilities would make it nigh impossible to do so. Also, in the previous clash using his Overlapping Palms, the puppet had displayed prowess far above his…

How in the world was he supposed to win this battle? The odds were overwhelmingly against his favor!

Dominion!

A light sphere of roughly a meter radius appeared around Zhang Xuan's body.

It seemed like there was no other choice than to use his ultimate skill then!

Weng!

But before Zhang Xuan could make any move with his Dominion, he suddenly felt the surrounding space crushing heavily down upon him.

The puppet had released its Dominion as well.

Astonishingly, the puppet's Dominion was twenty meters in radius, and just by standing in its perimeter, Zhang Xuan felt as if steel chains were wrapped tightly around his body, rendering it impossible for him to move even a single inch.

This is… Grand Dominion realm pinnacle? Zhang Xuan's lips twitched in frenzy.

It was no wonder why every single move he executed was neutralized so easily! The puppet's cultivation had already reached Grand Dominion realm pinnacle!

Currently, Zhang Xuan wielded the strength to subdue a Grand Dominion realm primary stage cultivator without any problem; perhaps a little strenuous against intermediate stage cultivators but definitely still possible to achieve victory, but against advanced stage and pinnacle experts… He barely stood a chance at all!

Hu!

With cold sweat breaking throughout Zhang Xuan's body, he immediately executed the Unbounded Voyager and forcefully escaped from the shackle-like restraints of the puppet's Dominion to a corner of the room.

Then, with a flick of his wrist, he took out the challenge token and crushed it.

Weng!

An aura rippled from the token, and the puppet who was just about to charge toward Zhang Xuan once more immediately halted its attacks. It took a few steps back before asking coldly, "Are you admitting defeat?"

Despite how intricacies behind their exchange of blows, in truth, the three moves that they had traded—a fist art, a sword art, and Dominion—lasted less than three breaths in total. Considering how they had barely explored the depths of each other's strength yet, it seemed a little too early to be admitting defeat at this point!

“I’m no match for you in my current state.” Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

In the first place, this trial was designed for Leaving Aperture realm pinnacle experts whereas he was only at Leaving Aperture realm primary stage. To be honest, it was not entirely impossible for him to emerge victorious if he were to utilize all of the means at his disposal, but… the circumstances hadn’t grown so desperate for him that necessitated such a course of action yet.

“Farewell!” Zhang Xuan turned around unhesitatingly and left the room.

But without clearing the Jia Corridor, I won’t be able to compile out a perfect Leaving Aperture realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art to cultivate… It’s almost like a paradox! It seems like I’ll just have to find other alternative methods to raise my fighting prowess then. Zhang Xuan thought as he made his way over to the front reception.

Currently, the greatest room of improvement for me should lie in the Three Swords of Lingxu and the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld.

There were two direct ways of raising one’s fighting prowess. First, through raising one’s cultivation, and second, through cultivating formidable battle techniques.

He wouldn't be able to advance his cultivation without compiling the complete Leaving Aperture realm Heaven's Path Divine Art, so it seemed like he could only pursue the second route.

He had two extremely powerful battle techniques at hand, and the successful cultivation of any of them would raise his fighting prowess immensely. However, it was a pity that they were terribly flawed, which was why he had put off cultivating them up to date.

I should ask around to see where I can find sword art manuals! Zhang Xuan thought as he arrived before the front reception.

"Zhang shi… did you clear the Jia Corridor?" Senior Shui had been lingering around the area out of curiosity, and she immediately spoke up in agitation as soon she saw Zhang Xuan.

"I didn't." Zhang Xuan shook his head. "The puppet in the Jia Corridor is simply too powerful, I'm still unable to match it with my current strength…"

"I see…" Senior Shui instinctively heaved a sigh of relief, but after realizing the rudeness of her action, her face immediately reddened in a fluster.

It was already unbelievable how the young man had managed to clear eight of the corridors successively without any rest, and if he could clear the Jia Corridor as well, she might have really been scared out of her wits.

"Excuse me, do you know where I can learn sword arts in the Sanctum of Sages?" Paying no heed to Senior Shui's actions, Zhang Xuan passed the challenge token back to Qing Yu as he asked.

"You wish to learn swordsmanship?" Before Qing Yu could reply, Senior Shui had already interjected with a frown.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"If you intend to learn swordsmanship, you are in luck! Senior Shui over here happens to be the most formidable sword practitioner amongst the younger generation in the

Sanctum of Sages, and her teacher is the most powerful swordmaster around here!" Qing Yu said.

"You are a sword practitioner?" Taken aback, Zhang Xuan turned his sight to Senior Shui.

Back at the Bing Corridor, the young lady had used all kinds of battle techniques and secret arts to deal with the puppets, but sword art wasn't one of them.

"Of course!" Hearing those words of skepticism, Senior Shui frowned in displeasure. With a flick of her wrist, she whipped out a sword and said, "Why? Do you want to try my swordsmanship?"

The usage of weapons and artifacts were banned in the Corridor of Puppets, and the lack of a sword would have severely limited the might of her swordsmanship, so she decided against using it altogether in the battle. However, this didn't mean that she would allow others to question her accomplishment in swordsmanship. She raised her sword up, and concentrated Sword Intent burst forth from her.

"Not too bad, but there's still room for improvement…" Seeing that Senior Shui had achieved the level of Upper Sword Heart, Zhang Xuan offered a few rare words of compliment. "If it isn't too much trouble, may I ask you to lead me to where sword art manuals are stored?"

"There's still room for improvement? Let me see how deep of an understanding you have in swordsmanship then!" With a cold harrumph, Senior Shui's body seemed to warp into a sharp sword as she charged forward with imposing momentum.

Paji!

But before she could even come close to Zhang Xuan, the sword she was wielding suddenly dragged her entire body down to the ground, shaking uncontrollably in her hand.

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